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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [BK](#)
SUBJECT: BOSNIA - TIHIC BLOCKS POLICE REFORM; DODIK
ADVOCATES SELF-DETERMINATION; LAJCAK SEES ELEMENTS OF A NEW
CRISIS

Classified By: Michael J. Murphy. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Talks between the six major coalition parties took place in Siroki Brijeg on February 2. High Representative Lajcak also took part in the meetings. The talks were intended to consolidate political support for the work of the police reform working group currently drafting legislation to implement the Mostar Agreement and allow for the signing of an SAA this spring. At a contentious press conference following the talks, Party for Democratic Action (SDA) President Sulejman Tihic announced that his party could not support legislation that merely created seven new state-level police institutions, which lacked authority over entity police. Alliance of Independent Social Democrat (SNSD) leader Milorad Dodik accused Tihic of playing politics with police reform. HighRep Lajcak accused Tihic of "blackmailing Bosnia" and warned of unspecified consequences.

On February 3, OHR staff told us that Lajcak was "shaken" by Tihic's position, which Lajcak believes amounts to repudiation of the Mostar Agreement and could derail the near-term prospects for a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA). We were told that Lajcak is also concerned about conclusions adopted by SNSD at the party's January 26 Main Board meeting. The conclusions (recently translated) imply that Republika Srpska has the right to "self-determination," call for the return of several state-level competencies to the RS, and suggest that the RS should reconstitute its intelligence service. According to OHR staff, Lajcak believes that the two events - Tihic's rejection of the Mostar Declaration and SNSD's decision to catalogue much of Dodik's more extreme rhetoric in an official party document - could provide the basis for another political crisis in Bosnia. He has called for a meeting of Quint Ambassadors on February 5 to discuss these issues. END SUMMARY

Siroki Brijeg: All Does Not End Well

12. (C) On Saturday, February 2, HDZ-1990 President Bozo Ljubic hosted a meeting of five coalition political parties (SBiH, SNSD, SDA, HDZ-BiH, HDZ-1990; PDP did not attend), along with High Representative Lajcak, in Siroki Brijeg to discuss implementation of the Mostar Agreement and the possibility of resuming constitutional reform talks. According to OHR, Ljubic, who along with HDZ-BiH President Dragan Covic, wanted the discussion to focus mainly on constitutional reform, tabled a paper on "principles for a process on constitutional reform," but other party leaders quickly rejected it, stressing that the time was not right for a discussion of the issue. Lajcak reportedly

characterized the Ljubic paper as "well meaning" but did not press the point. One OHR staffer speculated to us that Lajcak may have seen Ljubic's paper before it was tabled, noting that the HighRep had worked with Covic and Ljubic on the Mostar Agreement before the two men presented it as the "Croat proposal" for resolving police reform. Regardless, the parties agreed they would not take up constitutional reform until after an SAA is signed.

13. (SBU) Instead, the six leaders devoted the bulk of their time in Siroki Brijeg to an unfruitful discussion of police reform, particularly the legislation being drafted by the police reform working group that would implement the terms of the Mostar Agreement. The press conference immediately following the meeting quickly deteriorated into a public argument, dramatically underscoring that the meeting had failed to produce a political consensus on draft legislation.

While the host, Bozo Ljubic, attempted to read a joint statement, he was interrupted by SDA president Sulejman Tihic who announced that his party would not support a police reform model that preserved the existing police structures. Tihic also derided the creation of state-level police institutions that have no authority over local police authorities. Party for BiH President Haris Silajdzic then attacked Tihic for a lack of commitment to police reform. Tihic responded angrily stating that by signing the SAA, Silajdzic will legalize the RS police.

14. (SBU) Dodik initially watched the exchange with silent amusement but eventually joined the scrum, accusing Tihic of trying to destroy the Mostar Declaration. He added that Tihic's opposition was motivated solely by his rivalry with Silajdzic. Dodik also claimed that Tihic was fabricating a political crisis in order to achieve extension of OHR's

mandate. Dodik concluded by arguing that police reform legislation, despite SDA opposition, could be adopted in parliament with the support of five political parties.

Lajcak Shaken by Tihic's Obstructionism

15. (U) In subsequent comments to the press, Lajcak asserted that Tihic was motivated by Bosniak politics and is blackmailing Bosnia for the sake of parochial interests. Tihic's refusal to implement the Mostar Agreement placed party politics above the interests of the state and would have consequences, Lajcak added. Lajcak also said that by claiming the Mostar Agreement was inadequate to qualify Bosnia for an SAA, Tihic was calling EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn a liar and implying that "the EU does not know what it wants" police reform. Tihic later responded to Lajcak's comments by asserting that the High Representative is intimidated by "Dodik and his war against BiH," adding the HighRep "always caves in" to whatever Dodik demands.

16. (C) Lajcak's angry public response to Tihic's apparent repudiation of the Mostar Declaration was a genuine reflection of his feelings, according to OHR staff. Lajcak told OHR staff on February 4 that Tihic had "betrayed" his earlier police reform commitments and had "effectively derailed the SAA." Lajcak also predicted that it would require "a lot of pressure" from the international community to persuade Tihic to alter his now public position rejecting any police reform legislation that did not provide for new state-level police structures with authority over entity police forces. Lajcak said his assessment was based on a conversation he had in Siroki Brijeg with HDZ-BiH President Dragan Covic. Covic claimed that Tihic had said that he (Tihic) "would not allow Dodik to walk away with another concession" on police reform, claiming, "this is personal." Lajcak also speculated with his staff that Head of the European Police Mission General Coppola might be tacitly encouraging Tihic. At a minimum, Lajcak believes that Tihic had seen or been given several letters Coppola had sent to EU officials labeling the Mostar Declaration a "hollow reform."

According to his staff, Lajcak also believes that one of Tihic's aims may be to block the signing of an SAA prior to the February PIC, so the PIC would decide to keep OHR open beyond June 2008.

SNSD's Constitutional Proposal: Just What Is Dodik Up To

17. (C) According to OHR staff, Lajcak is also very concerned about the conclusions reached at the January 26 meeting of the SNSD Main Board, which OHR had just recently received and translated. The conclusions spell out the party's platform on a range of issues, including European integration, constitutional and police reform. OHR staff characterized the conclusions as codifying much of Dodik's more extreme rhetoric over the last several months as official SNSD policy. For example, in addition to advocating an "asymmetric federation" and Bosnia's "demilitarization," the SNSD Main Board suggests that several competencies previously transferred to the state should be returned to the RS, including those associated with the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council and the Indirect Taxation Authority. Most disturbingly, in OHR's assessment, is that the conclusions suggest the RS certainly should have the right to self-determination. The language on self-determination is carefully worded, but it could be read as implying the RS already has the right to self-determination, one OHR staffer suggested. Finally, SNSD asserts that the RS should have an internal intelligence service "to protect (its) constitutional arrangement." One OHR staffer told us that Dodik's rhetoric and actions (i.e., challenging the legitimacy of the state, preventing it from functioning) reminded him of events in Montenegro prior to its bid for independence. Dodik's aim was to demonstrate that Bosnia "did not work" and "then seek a divorce" he concluded.

Comment

17. (C) Lajak is reportedly concerned about the confluence of Tihic's obstructionism on police reform and SNSDs decision to transform some of Dodik's most extreme rhetoric into official policy. He has called a meeting of Quint

Ambassadors to discuss how OHR, and by implication, the Quint should respond. We anticipate that he will ask the Quint to a) put pressure on Tihic to honor his previous commitments on police reform and support legislation implementing the Mostar Declaration, and b) support a strong statement from OHR criticizing SNSD for adopting policies that the HighRep, and many others at OHR, see as anti-Dayton. According to OHR staff, Lajcak wants Quint support in advance of doing/saying anything because he feels that the Quint failed to support him sufficiently during the end game of the 2007 crisis over his October 19 measures.

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